

Cherry Creek C&H

2015 Annual Operating Instructions

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Cherry Creek Allotment. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Cherry Creek Allotment and reflects information discussed during the spring meeting on May 5, 2015. Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependent on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with the permittees to address range condition situations that may occur due to weather related circumstances.

Permitted Cattle Authorized

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Brand</u>
FS permit	387		(Temp)	7/11-10/15	
PU Ranch	405			7/11-10/15	PU
Total	792				

*PU was allowed to increase numbers under temporary authorization to prove the carrying capacity on the allotment. The Term Permit for PU authorizes 405 cattle while the Forest Service holds the unobligated portion for the additional 387 head.

<u>Grazing Unit Rotation</u>	<u>Estimated Days</u>		<u>Riparian/Upland/Woody</u>
*Richardson	27	7/11-8/6	4" (50%)/ (50%)/ 50%
*Middle Fork/Lupine	25	8/7-8/31	4" (50%)/ (50%)/ 50%
Left Fork	25	9/1-9/25	4" (50%)/ (50%)/ 50%
Poison Creek	12	9/26-10/7	4" (50%)/ (50%)/ 50%

*The pasture boundary between the Richardson and Middle Fork pasture was changed in 2013 to reflect a more prominent natural boundary through a steep ridge just above Crawford Canyon. Five days were removed from the Richardson pasture and added to the Middle Fork pasture. These estimated days and any additional changed days should be reviewed carefully over the next couple of years and adjusted if needed.

The NRCS SNOTEL sites across the Lost River Ranger District currently range from 64-90% of the Water Year average through the month of March. The Upper Big Lost River ranges from 70-80% of average and the Bear Canyon and Smiley Mountain SNOTEL sites both show 71% and 70% of average respectively. All indications show that cumulative drought impacts could persist or worsen this year. If this occurs the Forest Service expects that cattle may need to be moved more quickly through units and removed prior to the scheduled off date. Forage production is dependent on growing season (April through September) temperatures and precipitation. Even when drought conditions subside there is a lag time for plants to physically recover from the stress of the drought.

2015 Season Riders: For the 2015 season 2 riders are recommended on the allotment full time, 7 days a week. This means that if days off are granted, permittees or 2 other riders need to fill in behind for those days missed. The allotment boundary shared with Antelope and Alder Creek will need to be watched closely to ensure that cattle are staying on their permitted allotment. The riders pasture needs to maintain a 50 percent use, this will require additional certified weed free hay to maintain this standard. The rider's camp may have up to 10 horses at a time providing 2 horses per rider, as long as the 50 percent use can be maintained.

Allowable Use Standard: End of season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas. While adequate re-growth may occur under average growing season conditions, the opposite may be true during below average conditions. Special attention should be made to drier weather conditions. It is recommended a stubble height trigger above 4 inches be used in drier conditions to plan cattle moves. Upland standards for utilization are 50% use of key species (Idaho Fescue and Bluebunch wheatgrass) on current year's growth for a deferred rotation system.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that 50% use is not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus is going to be put on use levels in these areas. While all adjacent meadows should be looked at, the drier meadows have less chance of regrowth and therefore are of highest concern. The upland annual use level of 50% should be used to manage the dry meadows and your rangeland management specialist will work with you to determine when a desired use level has been met, so that everyone understands what the meadows should look like after livestock use.

Riparian areas with greenlines dominated by Kentucky bluegrass and tufted hairgrass should also receive special attention. Greenlines dominated by these plants have less bank stability than those greenlines dominated by deep-rooted plants and are in a lower state of ecological condition. Areas like this should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate.

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These include prevention of stream bank trampling, increase in rate of stubble height removal, changes in livestock behavior, changes in grazing preference from grasses and grass-like plants to young willows and other shrubs, large groups of cattle congregating in fence corners, at gates, or riparian areas for long periods of time.

Designated Monitoring Areas(DMA's): DMA's are used to monitor representative riparian areas within a grazing unit which establishes a record of utilization and trend. The information from the DMA is also used to plan cattle moves, determine if end of season indicators are met, and to evaluate whether current management is effective or needs to be modified. Permittee monitoring, documentation and photos are encouraged before entering and when leaving each unit.

Cleaning Grazing Units: Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height standard being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean, and providing range riders with adequate maps and Annual Operating Instructions. Range riders should keep

permittees informed of problems cleaning grazed units. Frequent back-riding indicates there is a herd management problem. It is also the permittees responsibility to correct problems caused by drift from other units.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment, interior fences should also be maintained prior cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements. Particular attention should be focused on the allotment boundary shared with the Alder Creek Allotment. Maintenance responsibilities have been mapped and split between the allotments for increased accountability. The Cherry Creek permittee is now responsible for drift and fence responsibilities between Big Flat Top Mtn. and Shelly Mtn., this means you are responsible for any cattle drifting in or out of this area.

The Forest Service will provide the permittee with additional fence material to ensure the electric fence around the entire perimeter of Mud Lake works. Permittees and riders should watch Mud Lake closely throughout the season to ensure neither Cherry Creek or Alder Creek cattle are not getting within the fenced areas as occurred in 2014.

The Bear Creek-Cherry Creek fence maintenance will be shared by permittees from both allotments. The Cherry Creek and Antelope permittees will determine the midpoint of the fence. Cherry Creek will maintain the east half and Antelope will maintain the west half. Please remember improvements need to be maintained even when taking resource protection non-use.

The Forest Service has provided the permittee with materials to reconstruct multiple trough systems on the allotment. The permittees need to complete the trough reconstruction on the Little Rough and Mahogany troughs and notify the Forest Service upon completion so each trough may be inspected once they are installed.

Weed Free Hay: In accordance with State Law, please ensure that range riders bring hay that is certified and tagged noxious weed free.

Grazing Fees: The grazing fees for the 2015 season are \$1.69/head month. Your grazing fee payment will need to be received prior to turning livestock out on the National Forest. Receipt of payment could take up to 2 weeks from the date payment is sent.

Actual Use Report: An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you shortly after cattle leave the allotment. Please notify this office when cattle are removed from the allotment. The association President will need to provide a consolidated report with dates when cattle entered the allotment, when the main herd was moved from unit to unit, when cattle were removed from the allotment. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their cattle entered and left the allotment. Please return the report 2 weeks after it's received to help expedite billing credits for next season and provide data for end of season reports.

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the District Rangeland Management Specialist at the Lost River Ranger District (208) 588-3400.